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SPRING 2015

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Think spring!

Mud season in Vermont inspires more than just spring cleaning. These three months are the busiest of the year for home buying and selling — as well as prime time for getting back to the land (or maybe just starting seeds indoors). This issue of *Nest* — Seven Days' quarterly supplement about home, design and real estate — covers all that and more.

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ON THE COVER

April Mackay and Sean Hindmarch own this Rochester home located above BigTran gallery. Flip to page 16 to see more photos of it. Photo by Gabrielle Coughman



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'Hood, Sweet 'Hood

A guide to Burlington home buying by neighborhood

BY CAROLYN SHAPIRO

Thinking of buying a home in Burlington? Join the club. The housing market in Vermont's largest city is competitive. Demand is high; supply is low. Buyers pay more than they would for the same house outside the city, and will find slim pickings in the most highly desired areas.

Between March 2014 and March 2015, just 181 homes were sold in Burlington, informs Nancy Jenkins of Nancy Jenkins Real Estate. The average selling price is \$326,678.

For first-time buyers, the numbers there can be overwhelming. The key to finding the right digs in the right location? Get to know the ins and outs of Burlington's distinct neighborhoods. When you know what "hood" fits your price range and living style, your search is instantly narrowed.

"It won't be difficult to choose from," says Mike Conroy, broker and founder of Conroy & Co. Real Estate Collective. "More like singular."

To help potential buyers navigate the market, Nest has divided Burlington into five neighborhoods—the New North End, the Old North End, downtown, the Hill and the South End. Read on to see what each has to offer.

REAL ESTATE

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New North End

Needy spent in the '50s and '60s properties in the New North End offer suburban perks. Here city dwellers have the chance to own a garage and a bigger yard—and they'll gain access to more parks and green space than in any other part of Burlington.

Of all the city neighborhoods, the most homes are sold in the New North End. According to Jenkins' figures, it accounted for 73 of the 395 sales in the past 12 months. Buyers will generally find more reasonable prices for properties in better condition.

But folks at the northern end of the neighborhood face a pretty long commute to downtown, schools and medical centers and Interstate 89. North Avenue carries heavy traffic in the "one-way-in, one-way-out" access road, making it "the biggest drawback of the New North End," says Suzanne Johnson, a real estate agent with RE/MAX. "That keeps the prices a little lower."

PROS: North Avenue near Lakeview Cemetery and up to the northern part of town, with the Interstate and Winooski River to the east.

AVVERAGE SELLING PRICE:

\$139,000

HOT SPOTS:

Appletree Point, very exclusive, with homes overlooking Lake Champlain and costing as much as \$1 million, some with private beach access; the northeast area, where some houses have tree views; the lower part of North Avenue, below Killarney Drive, with more modestly priced homes still close to beaches.

PARKS: Ethan Allen Park, Ladd's Park, North Beach Park, Winooski Valley Park District

CLOSEST SCHOOLS: Burlington High School, Lyman C. Hunt Middle School, J.J. Flynn Elementary School, C.P. Smith Elementary School

POINTS OF INTEREST: Easy access to bike paths, proximity to grocery stores, pharmacists and dry cleaners, Ethan Allen Homestead Museum, State Farm Dog Park and soccer fields; Gender H. Paquette Ice Arena; Route 127 connector to Old North End or points north.

Old North End

Many of these properties date back to the 1800s, in what was Burlington's first residential area. But they're showing their age and can be a bit run down. Student apartments dominate a large portion of the housing stock, which makes the buying selection scarce. Only 19 Old North End homes sold in the past 12 months, according to Jenkins' data.



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'Hood, Sweet 'Hood

The Old North End offers the most ethnic, racial and socioeconomic diversity in Burlington. It also has a cool vibe that makes it appeal to buyers, Coteby says. Home buyers can expect more noise and traffic and little privacy from their neighbors. But they'll have easy access to downtown.

"Walkability is huge when it comes to living in Burlington," says Alison Bergen Jenkins' daughter and a Burlington realtor at her firm. "That's what made the Old North End. That's what brought it back into popularity."

IRON DAWNS Pearl Street to Manhattan Drive, and North Avenue to North Prospect Street

AVERAGE SELLING PRICE: \$266,891

NETS & SPOTS: Lakewood Terrace, one along the lake and the old Morris power plant, now poised for redevelopment, between Franklin Avenue and Manhattan Drive, with small lots but fewer students

PARKS: Battery Park, Roosevelt Park, Prospect Park, small pocket parks and playgrounds tucked between neighbor hood streets

PRIVATE SCHOOLS: St. Johnsbury Academy at Lawrence Bureau, Taubman Arts Academy at H.O. Wheeler

POINTS OF INTEREST: Numerous neighborhood cafes and coffee shops, ethnic grocers on North Street, the CH Center for the Dramatic Arts and North End Studios

Downtown

Downtown Burlington doesn't move much in the way of single-family housing, but there are plenty of condos. Some are in new buildings — such as Sirocco on St. Paul Street — with beautiful lake views and high price tags.

Living in the heart of Burlington allows easy, walkable access to the Church Street Marketplace, dozens of restaurants, nightclubs and arts venues, and loads of events. But you trade convenience and culture for noise and city bustle.

IRON DAWNS: Between Pearl and Maple streets, from South Union to Lake Street

AVERAGE SELLING PRICE: \$300,187 (includes condos)

HOT SPOTS: The south side, around Maple and King streets, with old, turn-of-the-century housing; lower Church and St. Paul streets, with heavy traffic but more single-family options; Lake Street end caps

PARKS: Battery Park, Waterfront Park, City Hall Park

CLOSEST SCHOOLS: Edmunds Elementary and Middle schools

POINTS OF INTEREST: The Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, Merrill's Toy Cinema, ECHO Leahy Center for Lake Champlain sciences, the waterfront, City Market, the farmers market. Walk or hop on the shuttle to the University of Vermont and Medical Center



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The Hill

Home buyers who want, and can afford, four bedrooms or more should look on the Hill. The grand dames of Burlington housing tend to be surrounded by big yards and tall old trees.

High above the rest of the city, the Hill offers lake views. A trip to and from downtown requires a heart-pumping run, tightening walk on steep streets.

Prices are just so steep. "If you want to spend \$350,000 or less, there's certain parts of the Hill where you won't find anything," Conroy says. However, it's quiet and safe, with little through traffic.

"And it will hold your value," Johnson notes.

NEIGHBORHOODS: South Union Street to South Prospect Street; Pearl Street to Prospect Parkway

AVERAGE SELLING PRICE: \$460,205

NOT SPOTS: Lodge Road, where houses can run \$600,000 and up; Cliff and Spruce streets; the cul-de-sac of Overlook Park

PARKS: University of Vermont grounds and fields

CLOSEST SCHOOLS: Edmonds Elementary and Middle schools, Mater Christi School

POINTS OF INTEREST: Memorial Auditorium, Burlington Country Club, Royal Tyler Theatre at UVM, Rizcall Hall & UVM Stetson Campus

South End

The South End offers an urban location with suburban benefits: quiet streets, larger yards, community cohesion and easy access to I-89. It's the most popular for young, urban professionals. Borges says, "I'm doing it, it's a hot neighborhood. You'd probably have to buy fast and buy big."

South End
25 Lyman Avenue
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\$224,000

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Village Greens

Vermont "agrihoods" offer edible landscapes and tight-knit neighbors

BY KEN PICARD

Not so very long ago, a farm, dairy, vegetable garden or orchard surrounded nearly every Vermont home.

People lived and worked close to the land because that's where the bulk of their food came from.

Then came the postwar housing boom, industrial agriculture and the rise of the American suburb. Subdivisions sprouted, and measured lawns replaced the average homeowner's fields.

But the saying goes, everything old is new again. The latest trend in American subdivisions is "agrihoods," or residential neighborhoods that offer not alone working farms on the premises. Whereas builders previously attracted prospective buyers with swimming pools, golf courses and tennis courts, a new generation of home-liners is being lured back to the land — without having to give up their day jobs.

Admittedly, the agrihood concept isn't exactly new to the Green Mountain State, where agricentric communities have gone by various names and incarnations.

"I've heard of cohousing, intentional neighborhoods and eco-villages. But



"agrihoods?" That's a new one," says Ted Montgomery, owner and principal architect of Groundwell Architects. Montgomery designed, and still lives at, Trellis Shores, an intentional community in Charlotte, built in 1990 on 85 acres; it has 17 privately owned homes, each on one-half to three-quarters of an acre, plus a common house, where residents prepare and share meals weekly.

About 40 acres of communally owned land were set aside for permanent conservation, including five to 10 that are used for raising crops and other growing activities. Ten Shores has a CSA (community-supported agriculture) farm as well as chicken coops for eggs, hives for honey and a commercial composting operation, CV Compost Co.

Ten Shores, which Montgomery helped conceptualized for his 1992 senior thesis in architecture at the University of Cincinnati, is now home to about 50

people. Montgomery calls it a "culture with a soul," where most of the residents have met each other's extended families and formed the strong social cohesion that comes from working the land and regularly breaking bread together.

"It's like taking the temps or covered wagons and heading around the fire," he says. "A lot of that stuff is embedded in our DNA as a social species."

Similar communities have sprouted across Vermont in recent years, reflecting some with a heavier emphasis on conventional agriculture. Gold Hill Cohousing in Hartland, completed in 2003, combined two former dairy farms on 170 acres into an agrihood of 23 eco-friendly houses that can single family houses, duplexes and apartments.

With more than 60 residents, Gold Hill remains committed to its social

REAL ESTATE



mission of promoting sustainable living through small-scale food production. Cob's has at least 10 commercial food operations on-site, producing milk, cheese, frozen yogurt, marshmallows, eggs, bacon, lamb, beef and maple syrup.

But while Cob Hill residents are expected to pitch in on various chores and duties for the community — stacking firewood, maintaining paths, cooking and cleaning in the common house — residents are not required to be farmers to live there. As Cob's statement of principles notes: "We will not equate people's worth with the do or amount they can contribute to the market. We will ensure that each person's time, independence, obligations and pleasures are neither more nor less important than each other person."

One of Vermont's newest agribusiness is South Burlington's South Village. Designed and built as a "traditional neighborhood development" — an alternative to suburban sprawl — South Village sits on 220 acres, more than 70 percent of which are permanently protected from future development. Residents share access to common land that includes woods, meadows and wetlands, as well as a five-acre organic farm and a one-acre photovoltaic solar array.

Kelly Pake, of Cobble Brook Hickory & Sustainable Beauty, is variously described as South Village's broker, marketing director and media spokesperson. "Some people joke that I'm the South Village mayor," she notes.

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Nearly completed, South Village's phase one includes about 130 units, all single-family. Phase two, which is already permitted, will add another 94 units of townhouses and single-family homes. The community also has a CSA run by a professional farmer, pick-your-own gardens, edible landscapes and medicinal gardens for those who want to do some of their own growing. There's also an area designated for raising chickens.

Though Pala admits it's more costly for landowners to set aside so much land for farming and conservation, ultimately those expenses add value for homeowners financially and socially.

"This makes sense to me, especially in Vermont, where we have as much land that can be producing so much more food on a local level," she says. "It seems to be something people really want. Everyone who's here definitely chose this community because of its nature and the farm."

TOP ALERT: Children of Different Cultures and Their Parents

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Seat Filler

The Vermont Cedar Chair Company is sitting pretty

BY XIAO CHIANG-WARREN



Jason Lutz

Upbeat music fills the Vermont Cedar Chair Company warehouse in Hardwick, where energetic young staffers are cutting, sanding, assembling and packaging its wooden outdoor chairs. Owner Jason Lutz, 30, is on the phone, making sure everything is on track for the three regional trade shows his company reps will attend the following weekend.

"How a seat?" Lutz bellows with a confident grin, gesturing toward one of his chairs. "It's really comfortable."

He's not exaggerating. Lutz's chairs combine an Adirondack-style frame with a woven, hammock-style back and seat. Unlike the stiff wooden boards customary of outdoor furniture, these innovative "hammocks" are flexible and hug your body.

It's no wonder the company has grown exponentially since it launched five years ago. VCC's products are sold at local, national and international trade shows and in brick-and-mortar stores. For the second year in a row, sales are up more than 100 percent.

While Lutz and his 10-person team assemble up to 20 handwoven chairs per day, they can't always keep up with demand. They've had to turn away large orders, but Lutz is honing the manufacturing process to keep up.

The secret to success? It's

two-fold. He spent years perfecting the standout design of his product, and he's committed to sourcing its materials in an ecologically responsible way.

"Outdoor furniture is notoriously uncomfortable," Lutz points out. "We offer a comfortable alternative — and you don't have to worry about pillows."

Lutz developed his original chair concept during a summer spent working in Adirondack lodges between his junior and senior years at Ohio State University. He became fascinated with the natural bamboo that grew there, he says. The distinctive-looking plants are strong but lightweight and, when harvested, don't rot easily.

"I was very intrigued by it as a material," Lutz says earlier. "People didn't want to work with certain woods. They want to put it outside and forget about it."

Lutz initially aspired to start a fast-trade furniture company that would employ 1,000 people, though those plans didn't pan out when he returned to school. However, something temper-tan did come out of that summer: a prototype of the chair he now manufactures and sells. "As soon as we had a prototype, I knew we had something good," he says. "Everybody loved it."

Lutz completed college and moved to Vermont, where he worked

PHOTO COURTESY OF VERMONT CEDAR CHAIR COMPANY



FURNISHINGS

as a landscaper and considered his next steps. As fate would have it, his mother had purchased property in Danville and hired a logger to thin out a cedar stand in her yard. Instead, the logger cleared it entirely, leaving piles of saplings behind. When Lutz arrived to survey the damage, he had a light bulb moment.

"It was like, 'Wow, they left everything I need to make furniture,'" he recalls. "They took everything that they could use and left anything that was under four inches in diameter. And that's what we use."

And so he began the Vermont Cedar Chair Company, using cedar saplings from the Vermont logging industry, as well as cedar wood from a local "mom-and-pop" logging mill two miles upstream from his workshop. The latter, used in VCC's studio line, sells at a slightly lower price point and has a more polished look than the rough-hewn industry leftovers.

The company has also expanded its offerings, producing rockers, ottomans and lamps. And Lutz is launching a new business endeavor: the Tamboo Chair Company, inspired by that summer in

OUTDOOR FURNITURE IS NOTORIOUSLY UNCOMFORTABLE

JASON LUTZ

Jessica. It produces the same chair from lumber that's sustainably sourced and manufactured in Vietnam.

Lutz strives to leave no waste with his wood, and his chair seats are woven with natural materials. Their elegantly rustic aesthetic has been a hit with customers. Plus, those hardy natural materials stand up to time and weather — even to general exposure in harsh New England winters.

It's clear these well-designed chairs are a labor of love for Lutz. And, as he discovered when he was laying the groundwork for his line, that passion is partly genetic. "My mom said to me, 'Do you want to know why you like to make furniture?' and she pulled out the family albums," Lutz says. Turns out, three generations back, Lutz's family in Michigan owned what he says was one of the largest furniture companies in the world at the time: the Grand Rapids Chair Company.

"I had no idea," Lutz says. "It's amazing."

Years after, he took six chairs to a trade show in Woburn and sold out in an afternoon. "The rest," Lutz concludes, "is history." ■



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BY PAMELA FOLSTON

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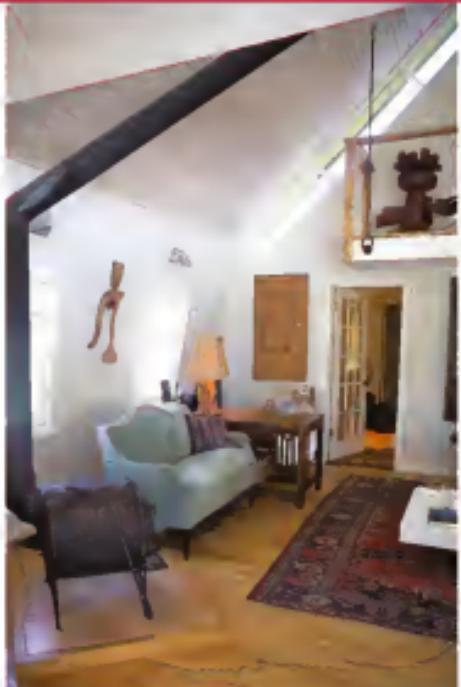
Unique, unorthodox, surprising: Those are just some of the adjectives that come to mind when one describes the residence of Amni Mackay and Doon Hinderyckx.

For starters, the two photos above are art gallery String alongs Route 100 in tiny Rochester, VT. BigGreen Gallery is impossible to miss. Its circular motif is the front — like a giant Buddhist cross — “really tortifies the public,” gallery owner Mackay says. That shape is echoed virtually in a cylindrical, 36-foot high tower at the back of the building. The fairy-tale tower contains a backlit spiral staircase leading to Mackay and Hinderyckx’s home. Climb a little higher, and you find an Rapunzel balcony window overlooking with a 360-degree view of the expansive landscape, the forest and the town’s 18th-century cemetery beyond.

Formerly a non-descript private house, constructed in 1912, the building had just two occupants prior to Mackay and Hinderyckx. Only a driveway separates it from the latter’s business, Green Mountain Bikes — from which, for 25 years, Hinderyckx had a view of the house. In 2004, the couple decided to buy it “as is what.” The following year, they got married.

“Our relationships don’t survive renovations,” notes Mackay. “But this was fun.” Asks the builder, Hinderyckx adds, “It helped that I could do a lot of the work myself.” He also called on his stepfather from California to lend a hand.





But first, Mackay and Hindrey do topped nearby architect Robert McRae Fiddle to renovation the place and draw up plans. And did he ever. The entire house oozes character and is full of innovative spaces and thoughtful details. Take a look. 

OPEN PLACED PLAN

From the stairwell of the old house, Mackay and Hindrey go in, but it's 1,000 square feet parameter. The new walls are subtly tilted at 10 degrees toward the high-pitched roof.

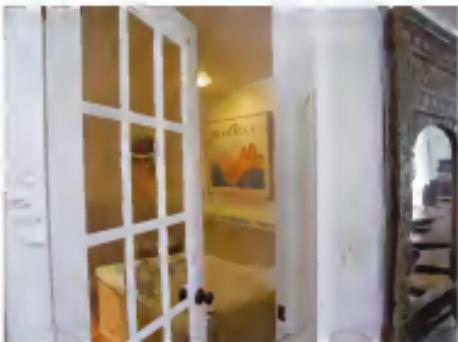
Much of this was unheated attic space, says Mackay. In addition to the main living room, any living room, an antique desk demarcates a de facto workspace, while an informal dining area with a dark wood table sits alongside tall windows. In the back, in another corner, beyond the lower door, a partial wall defines an open closet area, where jackets hang on pegs and books cluster on the floor. A small woodstove is the only heat source, bolstered Hindrey says, by triple-pane windows and three-and-a-half inches of spray insulation in the walls.



LOFTY WINTERSONS BY PINE

ARTISTIC TOUCHES

Works of art are everywhere — on the white walls and arranged on low shelving. Not surprisingly for a writer, Mackay has a discerning eye, and it shows in the objects she chooses to live with. Antiques and contemporary pieces mingle compatibly, a smattering of imported furnishings — such as an enormous mirror frame from Pakistan — give a nod to wacky influences. Rolling up one of a pair of custom-cut curtains, the British born Mackay admits that the "English in red" is gone to a little eclectic setting.

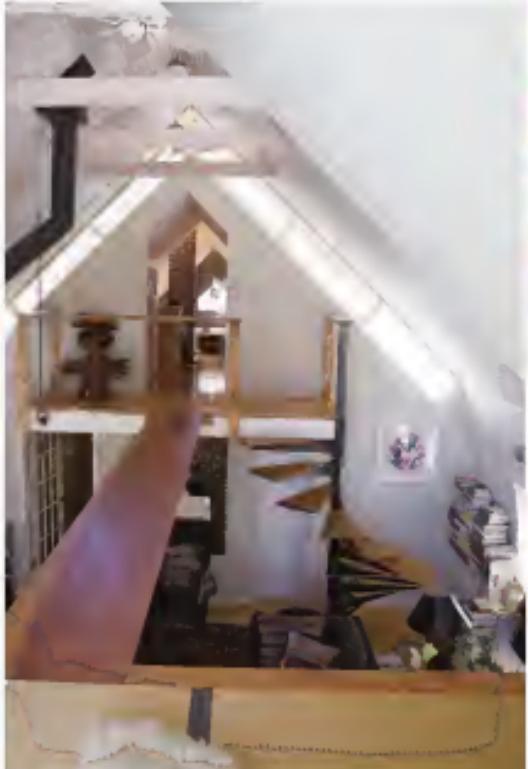


Lofty Ambitions

SUCH GREAT HEIGHTS

The first art piece is a lot to look at, but it's hard not just to look up. That's because two somewhat alarming architectural features provide access to the building's upper living spaces.

The first is a salvaged spiral staircase, sans handrail that climbs to a little overhead landing. The second is a catwalk—a thick plane some 38 inches wide—that spans the room at the height of a conventional ceiling and leads to a small loft. It's a veritable mezzanine walk, but the spot is inviting, flooded with light from cathedral-style windows and accented with oil-lamp children's art. "It's a great space," says Mackay, "and so does the family use it." She avows that no one has ever fallen from the piano, but admits that the multi-level home might be challenging for the elderly or infirm.



A ROOF WITH A VIEW

On the other side of that spiral staircase, toward the house's 100-foot-wide back wall, are a different kind of windows and a small efficiency. In the eaves, angled windows look out on downtown Rosemont. "We call it 'teen TV,'" Mackay quips. At the very front, nestled under the sloping roof, the couple installed a few Asian-style sunning area with cushions on the floor. The space embodies an elegant symmetry with the loft at the back, and typifies the smart use of nooks and corners in this house.

"Since it's not a very big place, we've created all these cozy little spaces," Mackay says.

FORM MEETS FUNCTION

Unusual details catch the eye in the kitchen, such as the lack of knobs—just simple pull-out cabinets and drawers. Instead, there are finger-holes for pulling. A recessed lighting fixture illuminates the doorway and showcases a collection of wooden bowls. Silverware storage is more hidden.

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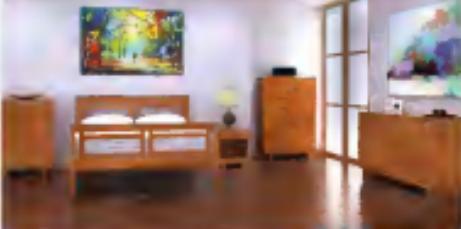
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- Lighter-weighted plants of your choice
- Wood or traffic tape to make your own or purchase from a home-improvement store
- S-hooks

DIRECTIONS

Begin by wrapping a length of floral stem wire around the top of a potted plant.

Twist the ends of the wire together so it loops up over the pot. With the ends of the wire firm a sturdy loop from which the pot can hang securely.

Repeat your trellis rig at a height where the plants can get the appropriate amount of sunlight.

Hang one end of wire back down the wall. Use other lengths of wire to frame the trellis. Securely hang weighted plants from one section end of the hook. Repeat this step for all your plants.

WHAT YOUR PLANTS ARE NEEDED:

For an outdoor trellis, use a trellis or mounting trim on a wall. For an indoor trellis, use a spring trellis for a light need that won't drag on your floors, or heavier plants than their hanging weight and fit several on the side.



High Hopes

How to make a vertical garden

BY CAROLYN FOX

It's been a long, cold winter, and Vermonters are ready for spring. That much was clear on February 27, the opening day of the Vermont Flower Show. Forming the kind of slow-moving lines more often seen at Disney World, hundreds of people shuffled through an elaborate indoor garden display. They stopped to smell the tulips and to pet the lush green grass like it was something they'd never seen before — or, perhaps, thought they'd never see again.

Thankfully, warmer days are right around the corner, and many of us are starting to plan our own gardens. For renters and city dwellers, however, space constraints make growing a challenge. What do you do when your landlord won't let you dig up the back yard, or when you're limited to a 2-by-6-foot balcony?

Easy: Plant a vertical garden instead.

Vertical gardens are a popular alternative for folks who don't have a lot of horizontal space to work with. And they're a popular trend in gardening right now, because these "living walls," as they're often called, look like a green work of art. If you've got a wall or fence, you can turn it into a

home for vining, annual and even perennials.

These upright gardens take many shapes. Savvy folks make them out of wooden shipping pallets, old bookcases or even hanging shoe racks. Once constructed, the "gardens" require little maintenance beyond hosing, fertilizing and watering — there's no weeding or knotting. Plus, they instantly beautify your space.

Near opened a simple but epic-looking vertical display by Gardner's Supply at the Flower Show. The gardeners had simply attached small potted plants to a hanging wooden crate with wire.

Inspired, we went home and built a larger vertical garden using a trellis. Indoors, this setup would be great for seed starting or growing fresh herbs for the kitchen. Outdoors, the sky's the limit. And it's mobile. Pick it up to move it outdoors or in, and even float it across your yard to receive sunlight for the best light. ■



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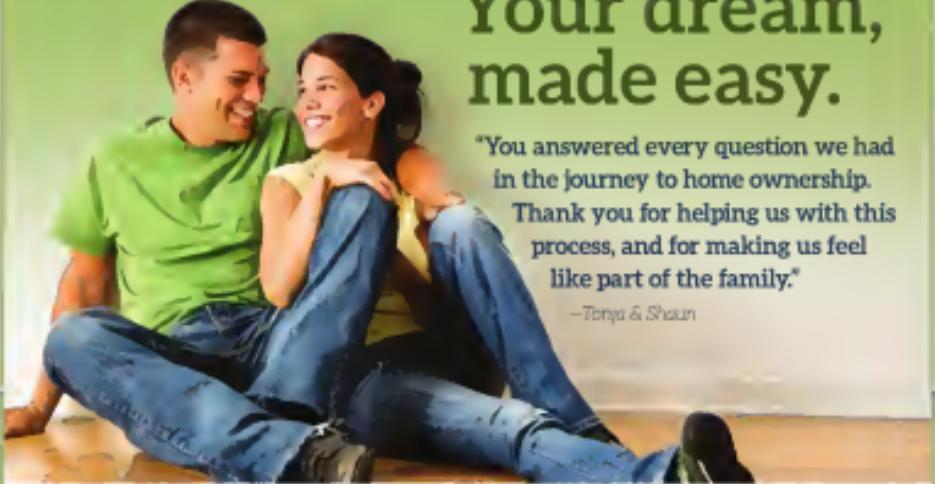
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